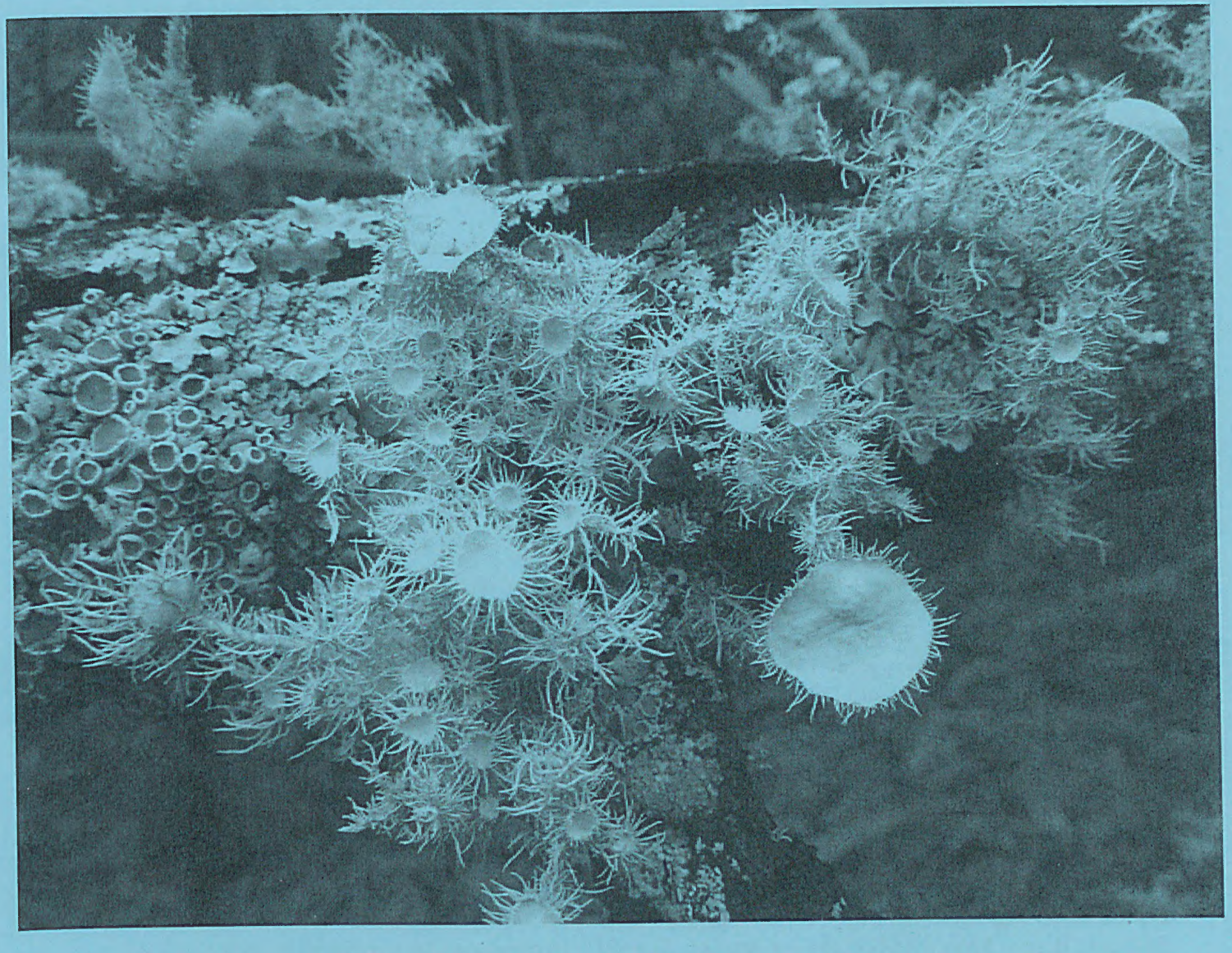
3

WHIRRAKEE

September 2013 **Vol. 34 No. 8**

Registered by Australia Post. Publication No. VBH4462



MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE BENDIGO FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc.

Address for correspondence: PO Box 396, Bendigo 3552. Web address: www.BendigoFNC.com.au
ISSN 0812-423X e-mail address: info@bendigofnc.com.au

Office Bearers for 2012 - 2013

President	Jan Orr	5443 5668
Vice President	Richard Goonan	
Secretary/Public Officer	Stuart Fraser	5443 1326
Minute Secretary	*position vacant*	
Treasurer	Ben Goonan	
Membership Officer	Anne Bridley	5442 6188
Excursion organiser	John Lindner/Joy Clusker	5448 3406
Syllabus organiser	Ben Goonan	
Librarian	Diana Collier	5443 0137
Garden Convenor/Secretary	*position vacant*	
Hall Management	Maurie Lewis (assisted by Rob Moors)	0407 427179
Whirrakee contact/editor	Sabine Wilkens e-mail: s.wilkens@latrobe.edu.au	5443 2797
Co-editor	Gemma Candy	
Whirrakee mailing coordinator	Vanessa Richardson	
Website coordinator/Webmaster	Ben Goonan	

Membership of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club is open to all those interested in Natural History. The subscription rates are: Single $40; Family $50; Concession: Single $35; Family $40. *Whirrakee* subscription only is $40.

General meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month. The venue for General meetings is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square. The meeting starts with a 10 minute thing-of-the night natural history segment. The invited speaker starts at 8:00pm and meetings conclude with supper. The Annual Meeting is held in September.

Committee meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 6:00pm. Members of the Committee are the Office Bearer listed above and the following members: Anne Bridley, Glenise Moors, Joy Clusker, Kerrie Norris, John Lindner.

Excursions are conducted regularly and are advertised on the diary page of the *Whirrakee*. The assembly point for excursions is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, unless otherwise specified. Several interclub field naturalist campouts are held every year.

The Bendigo Field Naturalists Club has one sub-group (the Fauna Study Group) and is actively involved in local conservation issues. An **indigenous garden** has been established around the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building. Working bees are advertised on the *Whirrakee* diary page.

Fauna Study Group: Chairman: John Burtonclay, Fadersons Lane, Mandurang (5439 5710)
Secretary: Bill Holsworth, 13 Nabilla Crs., Bendigo (5443 4063)
Equipment Officer: Maurie Lewis (0407 427179)
Regular fauna excursions take place most Fridays. See page 11 for details.

Bird Observing: Club members conduct regular bird surveys. Please contact Anne Bridley 5442 6188 or Glenise Moors 5439 6254 for details. Special bird observations should be reported to Anne Bridley 5442 6188.
To propose bird observing excursions please contact Kerrie Norris 5447 8017.

Front cover photo?...see page 2

WHIRRAKEE

Monthly Newsletter of the Bendigo Field Naturalist Club

Vol. 34, No. 8, September 2013

Whirrakee takes its name from the Whirrakee Wattle (*Acacia williamsonii*), which is virtually endemic to the Bendigo region

CONTENT

Item	Contributor	Page
Short notices		3
BFNC Bird Count – Bendigo Waste Water Treatment Plant ponds 23/8/2013	Jan Orr	8
July Excursion report (abbreviated)	John Lindner	9
BFNC October campout notice	John Lindner	10

Authors are responsible for the accuracy of the information they use and also for any opinions expressed in their articles. Contributions should be posted or e-mailed to the editor at least two days prior to the last Wednesday of the month. They will be included as soon as possible after they are received, although space restrictions occasionally require shortening of articles or holding them over till the following edition of *Whirrakee*.

Articles in *Whirrakee* may be reproduced, but permission should be obtained from the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club, and acknowledgment should be given to the author and the Club. Some back issues are still available on request.

Editor's Note

It's September and that means our Annual General Meeting and some serious self-examination as to our role and contribution to the running of the Club. If you have not already done so, please consider putting up your hand to help in one of many ways… either by nominating for a particular office, or by nominating for the committee, or by nominating to assist someone in their role.

September is also the peak of flowering in our district so I am looking forward to the spring flowers that will illustrate our four colour pages in the next months. This month I have focussed on landscapes and the less obvious 'plants', but I am sure that next months almost all four pages will be filled with flowers. I hope you can be out in the bush and enjoy spring in Bendigo.

Front page photographer: Jenny Shield

Damp lichens are very photogenic anyway, but a mixture of them on a branch is an intricate, three-dimensional work of art. This array of lichens was photographed on the weekend of 24/25th August near Halls Gap in the Grampians. More lichens are featured on page 7 in this issue.

Short Notices

Free to a good home

There are three complete sets of *Whirrakee,* Vols. 27 – 32, 2006 – 2011, i.e. 6 years, of the periodical available for anyone who would like them or some of them. Does anyone know of others or other groups, institutions etc, who would be interested in a complete set or part of? It is interesting to compare the thickness of earlier volumes. The magazine has certainly slimmed down in the past years!

Membership Fees for 2013 – 2014

Just a reminder that our new membership fees are as follows:

Single membership	**$40**
Family membership	**$50**
Single concession	**$35**
Family concession	**$40**
Subscriptions	**$40**

There should have been a renewal slip included with your last (August) *Whirrakee*.

Email Notifications

If you wish to be advised promptly of interesting sightings, events or other special communications you may wish to subscribe to our club's email notifications service. Subscribers to the service who make an unusual or interesting sighting in our region can email all other members of the service.

Email **subscribe** in the subject line to info@bendigofnc.com.au if you wish to join the service. Include your full name in the body of the email.

To be added to the list you must first send an email to the address provided. This is the easiest way to manage the system.

Additional meeting for September

The BFNC and 'Spring in the Bendigo Bush' are running a second meeting in September with Dr Beth Gott from Monash University speaking on 'Medicinal indigenous plants'. 18th September 7.00pm, Golden Square Senior Citizens Hall.

Please note that this is an additional meeting for September and does **not** replace our normal general meeting. Bookings through the Spring in the bush site is essential or e-mail info@bendigofnc.com.au

---

Notice of (another) special general meeting

A special general meeting will be held at 7:30 on Wednesday 9th October (prior to the general meeting) at the Golden Square clubrooms to consider the following special resolution which has been moved by the club committee:

"That the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club adopt the proposed new rules of association."

It is necessary for 3/4 of those voting to be in favour for the resolution to be passed.

A member may vote by proxy, provided that notice is given to the club secretary no later than 24 hours before the time of the meeting.

Copies of the proposed new rules will be available at the September and October general meetings, by email from info@bfnc.com.au or by using the following web address: http://www.bendigofnc.com.au/fNatsNewRules.html. There won't be a link to this page on the public view BFNC web pages. The proposed new rules contain the club's new statement of purpose (see August *Whirrakee*) and are an amended version of the new Model Rules for an Incorporated Association as contained in the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012.

If the special resolution is passed, Consumer Affairs need to give their approval of the proposed rules before they become the club's rules.

There are a lot of interesting talks, events and walks on as part of the **'Spring in the Bendigo Bush'** program: Here is one event, a selection of others is on the back page:

September 29

Change Over Time At One Tree Hill And Crusoe Reservoir with Bendigo Field Naturalists Anne Bridley and Jan Orr, 9.30am - 11.30am. This is an opportunity to visit either One Tree Hill or Crusoe Res. Registration essential, contact Bendigo Field Naturalists Club info@bendigofnc.com.au

Wintery Scenes at Mt Feathertop Photographer: Michal Angove

Slime moulds after the rains…
Photographed by Joy Clusker at Castlemaine Gardens on Saturday 24th August 2013

Leocarpos fragilis, at the plasmodium stage, i.e. on the move (left) and at the sporangia (or fruiting) stage (above and below)

(left) Anne Bridley and Rod Orr inspecting a tree with many scars on the Boort excursion

Excursion to Boort, July 14 for report see page 8 (Photographer: Joy Clusker)

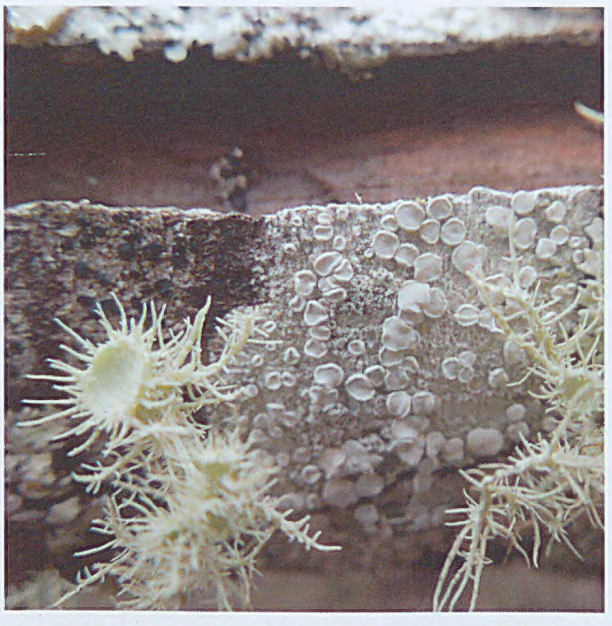
(above) remains of tree used for stretching possum skins

(left) birthing tree

Below is a photo of a *Grevillea* obtained by 'focussed stacking'. The great detail is achieved by taking slices of photos, and putting them together in one image. This is just a teaser, as the equipment is brand-new. Hopefully we can explore further what this technology can do in the near future.

'Cryptogams' in the Grampians

Photographer: Jenny Shield (weekend 24/8/13)



Lichens are partnerships between fungi and algae and they are fascinating organisms. Many are used for natural dyes (top left, top right)
Fern frond with sporangia (bottom right)
Moss with young spore capsule (middle left)
Is the bottom right image of a hornwort?

BFNC Bird Count - Bendigo Waste-water Treatment Plant ponds 23.8.2013

Author: Jan Orr

Weather: Considerable rain over past week. 100% low cloud cover, cold light westerly wind. Water levels were high and the surrounding paddocks had surface water in the low lying areas.

We were unable to survey the main pond as we have done in the past as Coliban Water have a new contractor managing the site who wants to do things differently. A BFNC member will have to be inducted into a set of new rules and procedures before we will be able to conduct a complete bird count once more.

However we were able to access May Swamp via the easement track along Eaglehawk Creek as this is crown land and also survey the wetlands adjacent to Wallenjoe Rd.

Survey Site No.1 Wallenjoe Rd from the entrance gate to the main pond to the Eaglehawk Creek access track.

We saw:

Black Duck, Grey Teal, Chestnut Teal, Musk Duck, Australasian Grebe, Hoary-headed Grebe, Great Cormorant, Darter (calling), White-faced Heron, Australian White ibis, Straw-necked Ibis, Black Kite, Whistling Kite Australian Spotted Crake, Purple Swamphen, Dusky Moorhen, Coot, Black-tailed Native-hen, Silver Gull, Red-kneed Dotterel, Masked Lapwing, Galah, Eastern Rosella, Musk Lorikeet, Red-rumped Parrot, Superb Fairy-wren, Noisy Miner, Red Wattlebird (calling), Blue-faced Honeyeater, Grey Butcherbird, Australian Magpie, Magpie Lark, Willie Wagtail, Australian Raven, Welcome Swallow, Tree Martin, Fairy Martin, Little Grassbird (calling), Common Starling, Common Myna

Survey Site No.2 10:30 - 12:30

Eaglehawk Creek easement track through to the north-eastern corner of May Swamp.

Black Duck, Hardhead Duck, Australasian Grebe, Hoary-headed Grebe, Australian Pelican, White-necked Heron, Black Kite, Whistling Kite, Brown Falcon, Australian Spotted Crake, Purple Swamphen, Dusky Moorhen, Coot, Superb Fairy-wren Red Wattlebird, White-plumed Honeyeater (calling), Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Grey Butcherbird, Australian Raven, Willy Wagtail (calling), Red-browed Finch, Mistletoe Bird (calling), Welcome Swallow, White Backed Swallow, Fairy Martin, Tree Martin,, Little Grassbird (calling), Grey Shrike Thrush (calling), Common Blackbird (calling)

Other Species heard during morning:

Common Froglet , Plains Froglet

July excursion report (abbreviated) – Boort lakes, woodlands and Aboriginal cultural heritage

by John Lindner

Date Sunday 14 July 2013

Leader Paul Haw, local naturalist, indigenous plant grower and historian

Organiser Diana Collier

Participants Rod and Jan Orr, Joy Clusker, Matt Comer, Marian Hill, Pam and Anthony Sheean, Rachel Tanner, Jane Cleary, Rose-mary Bellbourne, Jean Hill, Anne Bridley, Janet Justin, Ben Goonan, Neil Foley, Terry Attard, John Lindner, Kate Lindner, Alistair White

Acknowledgement Ben Goonan checked and corrected the plant names.

*Indicates an introduced plant or weed.

Conclusion This excursion, to an area which we have not visited for many years, was very interesting with particular reference to the changing lake water levels, vegetation, water birds and Aboriginal cultural artefacts.

Stop 1 Lake Leaghur (15 km north of Boort)

This fine body of water is located 5 km west of the Loddon River, and is the first lake in the area to fill when the river is high. Its entire eastern boundary comprises an elevated sandy lunette (crescent-shaped dune), created by sediments blown from the lake bed when it was dry in the distant past. The Red Gums in the centre died when the lake was filled, and their stumps were cleared in the 1960s to enable recreational use.

The lake is fringed by River Red Gums (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*), and there are numerous Black Box (*E. largiflorens*) away from the water. As the edge of the lake dries out, a Lakebed Herbland develops, some notable species being Clammy Goosefoot (*Dysphania pumilio*), a type of Knotweed (*Polygonum plebeium*) and Smooth Heliotrope (*Heliotropium curassavicum*)*. There were also scattered clumps of Tangled Lignum (*Muehlenbeckia florulenta*).

The lake held a huge population of waterbirds, the most numerous of which were Pelicans (who remained quite unmoved despite our close approach at the southern end) and Grey Teal. Other waterbirds were Pink-eared Ducks, Black-tailed Native Hens, Black Swans, Mountain Duck and Black-fronted Dotterel. Birds of prey included Wedge-tailed Eagles (3) and Whistling Kite. Evidence of Brush-tailed Possums was plentiful in the form of droppings. There were many shells of Freshwater Mussels embedded in the mud.

There was plentiful evidence of past Aboriginal activity: clay cooking balls from fires, ochre rock most likely traded from the Mallee, quartz chippings from the making of stone tools and scars on trees caused by the removal of sections of bark for the stretching and drying of possum skins (see page 6). We walked to a large habitation mound in the corner of the lake. It height was about one metre above the general surface, and it had a fresh grass growth of over its black soil comprising a mixture of wood ash and clay cooking balls. Unfortunately Horehound (*Marrubium vulgare*)* and African Box-thorn (*Lycium ferocissimum*)* bushes could also thrive there. There was a second such mound close by. Paul said that about 50 mounds had been found around the lake.

A little further on were two very large, dead River Red Gums with some interesting features. The first had 5 examples of branches joined into rings, all of which were dead. According to Paul, there had once been 9 rings. Such trees may have been created by tying branches together, with the most likely purpose of functioning as boundary markers between tribal territories. The second was a birthing tree (see page 6), a large River Red Gum with a bulbous base and a deep crack running the full height on one side. At the base of the crack was a cavity, large enough to admit a person.

Stop 5 Lake Boort (2 k east of Boort)

We went down onto the lake bed from Paul Haw's own home which is perched high above it on the lunette. The permanent filling of the lake via Kinypanial Creek in the nineteenth century resulted in the death of all the large River Red Gums. The dry lake now resembles a forest of branchless dead trunks, with the most recent water level indicated by the dark bases. From the huge Loddon River floods of early 2011, the last water finally dried up around Christmas 2012.

Now that the lake will no longer be kept artificially high, the water regime will go through more natural wetting and drying phases. Many young eucalypt seedlings have re-established on the shoreline. There were also a few Eumong seedlings (*Acacia stenophylla*), a riverside wattle, courtesy apparently of Paul's son who scattered some seed. As for Lake Leaghur, an extensive Lakebed Herbland has appeared on the rich mud: Austral Licorice (*Glycyrrhiza acanthocarpa*), Pale Knotweed (*Persicaria lapathifolia*) and Creeping Monkey-flower (*Thyridia repens*). Introduced weeds include Ox-tongue Thistle (*Helminthotheca echioides*)*, Prickly Sowthistle (*Sonchus asper* subsp. *asper*)* Prostrate or Creeping Heliotrope (*Heliotropium supinum*)* and Chingma Lantern (*Abutilon theophrasti*)*.

There was a large amount of evidence of Aboriginal occupation of this productive lake environment: clay balls on old cooking sites which are quite easy to locate (37 of these have been surveyed), quartz fragments as a result of shaping tools from corestones (all the quartz was imported into this area), scarred trees from large slabs of bark having

been removed and toeholds cut into trees in order to climb them to smoke out possums. Near the junction of the creek with the lake was another elevated habitation mound. Further up the creek, Paul showed us a cluster of dead gums, which had had numerous small plates of bark removed, between 4 and 9 per tree. These sections were used to stretch and dry possum skins (see page 6).

There were few birds here, except for Brown Quail (which were very numerous after the lake dried), Galahs and Silver Gulls (a large colony is in residence at the moment).

Bendigo Field Naturalist Club Proposed Spring Campout

Date Weekend 26 – 27 October 2013

Location Warby Ranges, Warby-Ovens National Park. This elongated park is located West of Wangaratta and north of Glenrowan
Organiser John Lindner, telephone 54483406
Notification Please notify me if you intend to participate. If I am not at home, please leave a clear message with your phone number and the number of people who will be coming with you
Campsite Wenhams Camp, at the southern end of the range. (Note: if it is very wet, at the advice of the ranger, we may have to move to Forest Camp at the northern end of the park. But hopefully not . . . .)
Distance Via Goornong, Colbinabbin, Rushworth, Murchison, Violet Town and Glenrowan, the distance to the campsite is 212km Allow 2.5 to 3 hours.
Map A sketch map of the route from Glenrowan township (32 kilometres) to the campsite will be supplied at the club meetings in September and October
Facilities
•Water tank attached to the (pit) toilet block, which is probably quite OK but may be stained brown by leaves. Hopefully there will be enough for washing and cleaning.
•Fireplace/barbeque
•Picnic tables
•Space for camping

Please bring
•Your own drinking water
•Firewood, if you want a barbeque or a campfire
•Wet weather gear
•Walking boots
•Camera, binoculars
•All your food

Information You can download and print the information and map for the Warby-Ovens National Park from the Parks Victoria website at www.parks.vic.gov.au

Attractions Vegetation communities: Woodland on granite on the Warby Range, box-ironbark in the Killawarra Forest.
Interesting plants – eg. Austral Grass-tree, Spurwinged Wattle, orchids, Birds, particularly the Turquoise Parrot if we are lucky

Activitiess planned: Rather than an unstructured program where everybody does as they please, we may try to formalize some of the activities (eg. botany) so that we have a leader with a group interested in that subject for a set time

Walks: There are several walking tracks, around which other topics could be structured
• Salisbury Falls, 8.0 km return approx.
• Summit of Mount Warby, 2.0 km return
• Summit of Mount Glenrowan, 9.0 km return from Taminick Gap
• Pine Gully Nature Walk, 2.0 km loop from Pine Gully Picnic Area
• Friends Track, 4.6 km loop from Wenhams
• Kwat Kwat lookout, 1.0 km return from Friends Track, with views of the Ovens River valley and the Alps
• Killwarra Forest (Red Ironbark) at the northern end of the park

Program
Friday: Arrive in the afternoon or earlier
Saturday: You could come up Saturday but this leaves you a lot less time
am Activities from 9.00 am onwards (to be decided)
pm Activities (to be decided)
Sunday: am Activities (to be decided)
pm Pack up and depart

Diary

All Club meetings are held at the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High St Golden Square, unless otherwise indicated.

Wednesday September 11 7.30pm
Dr. Phil Macumber (Macumber Consulting) will talk to us about 'The archaeology of Arabia in the context of water and landscape (covering the last half million years)'

Regular Fauna Excursions
Every Friday morning starting at around 9 to 9:30 the Fauna Group inspects nest boxes in the Spring Gully area. The excursions are led by Maurie Lewis, 16 Vains St. Golden Square. Phone 0407 427 179. Phone Maurie to confirm exact departure times and location. If you don't phone and go directly to Maurie's house and find nobody at the house between 9 and 9:30, then the excursion is not on.
It may be that these excursions are coming to an end. Make sure you ring Maurie if you'd like to go on such an excursion.

Family Nature Club
September: Sunday 15th September. Bendigo Creek and Birds: Joint activity with 'Spring in the Bendigo Bush'. **Registration:** Bendigonatureclub@gmail.com or 5443-1326
Check out their 2011 and 2012 activities at http://bendigofamilynatureclub.blogspot.com/

Bendigo Native Plant Group meeting.
All interested people are welcome to come along. Meeting starts at 7:30pm on the third Tuesday of the month, Golden Square Senior Citizens Hall.
Next meeting: 17th of September.

The 7th Annual **Friends of Kooyoora Inc Wildflower Show** is on the weekend of Saturday September 14th & Sunday September 15th 2013 at the Rheola Hall. See page 10 in the August *Whirrakee* for details.

Wildlife Rescue & Information Network Inc.
W.R.I.N. is an organisation dedicated to the care of orphaned, sick or injured native animals. It is fully endorsed by the Dept of Sustainability and Environment.
Please call our Emergency Number for Help for Fauna in Need. Phone: 0419 356433.

Below is a selection from the 'Spring in the Bendigo Bush' program. For full program see http://www.springinthebush.org/

September 4
Keep Still And Pass The Binoculars Whaddamy Lookinat? An introduction to bird-watching @Kennington Reservoir, 9am - 11am. This is a Birdlife Australia (Echuca district) activity. Registration essential, contact Ben Goonan 0403 664 635

September 14
Walking Through Country -An Indigenous Perspective with Bambi Lees and Terri Williams. Learning the language of land, sky, bird, dirt, rock and water @ Salomon Gully, 10am - 1pm. Registration essential, contact springinthebendigobush@gmail.com

September 8
A History Of Fleeting Moments: The Importance Of Observing And Recording Local Species with Geoff Park @The Engine Room, 6pm. All welcome. For registration: springinthebendigobush@gmail.com

September 9
Biophilia Blitz In The Box-Ironbark Inspired by E. O. Wilson. Observing and recording the living world in the moment. All ages, all welcome. For registration contact springinthebendigobush@gmail.com

September 30
Transforming The Landscape Over Time: Our Relationship With The Bush- Boom & Bust with
Gerry Gill and Charles Fahey @The Engine Room, 6.30pm. Registration essential, contact springinthebendigobush@gmail.com